

Contingency Planning and Emergency Response

Environmental Indicators

The fundamental purpose of the Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup is to increase municipal and local capacity to prepare for and respond to hazardous material emergencies and optimize the use of U.S. and Mexican resources in environmental emergencies. The workgroup coordinates binational activities through the Joint Response Team, which assists state and local officials and the public in the development of joint sister city plans in order to be better prepared to mitigate the effects of chemical accidents along the border. This work is being accomplished by providing support to the border cities to identify the hazardous chemical risks present in their community and reduce those risks.

Indicator in progress:



Number and location of industries along the border posing risk that have coordinated emergency response plans.

Facilities with hazardous chemicals run the risk of having chemical accidents that could affect surrounding communities. These facilities, therefore, are the first line of defense in mitigating the effects of a chemical accident, should one occur. Having an emergency response plan will provide for initial protection for communities from the effects of a chemical accident.

It is expected that the following sectors will be included in this indicator: electric power generators, refineries, chemical industry, metallic and non-

metallic minerals, vegetable and animal products, wood and derivatives, food processing, textile industry, and distribution and storage of liquid petroleum gas.

By 1999, information on industries along the U.S. border posing risk will be available. The Clean Air Act of 1990 requires facilities that pose hazardous



Participants in an emergency response exercise in El Paso, Texas, conducted as part of the U.S.-Mexico joint training program.

materials risks to develop and submit Risk Management Plans to EPA. These plans will be placed in a computer database system that the public can access, and will include information on the amount and location of hazardous chemicals at the facility, a history of the chemical accidents that have occurred at the facility in the last five years, and a description of the worst-case accident that could occur at the facility.

Indicator in progress:



Number of organizations capable of responding to chemical emergencies along the border, by state and locality or municipality.

When local communities lack the capability to respond to chemical accidents, state or federal responders need to be deployed to such accidents, resulting in potential delays in mitigating the incidents and preventing additional harm to the community and the environment.

The Contingency Planning and Emergency Response Workgroup has begun surveying hazardous materials response teams this year, and expects to have data for this indicator in 1998.

Indicator in progress:



Number of sister cities with Local Joint Plans.

Sister cities must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively when a chemical accident occurs in order to mitigate devastating human health and environmental effects. Although these cities are in different countries, they share a common border and must, therefore, work together to combine their resources and protect their communities from the risks associated with chemical accidents. Creating a sister city plan prepares sister cities for such accidents, and identifies ways to reduce risks and prevent chemical accidents.

A local joint plan is a document that describes the organization of available actions, people, services, and resources

for response during a disaster. The plan is based on risk identification, available human and material resources, level of community preparedness, and local response capabilities. It also establishes the hierarchical and functional structure of the authorities and organizations working during the emergency in the context of the relationship between two border cities.

Indicator in progress:



Number of border area accidents of record per year, classified by type, frequency, and hazardous substance.

The type of accident that will be measured by this indicator includes any dangerous event that occurs due to the handling of hazardous sub-

stances, such as spills, leaks, fires, or explosions, and which cause temporary or permanent damage to the environment, human health, or property. In the United States, this information is captured on the Emergency Response Notification System, which records the type and quantity of the chemical involved; the date, time, and location of the accident; the date and time of the response efforts; and the type of response and mitigation efforts.

It is expected that U.S. and Mexican data for this indicator will be available in 1998. While data are available for some states or geographic regions, information for the entire border area is incomplete.

Sister Cities with Local Joint Plans

Brownsville, Texas — Matamoros, Tamaulipas

Sister Cities Developing Local Joint Plans

Laredo, Texas — Nuevo Laredo, Nuevo Leon
 Del Rio, Texas — Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila
 Eagle Pass, Texas — Piedras Negras, Coahuila
 El Paso, Texas — Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua

